

Trail Description & Opportunity for a Trail Network

Few silver linings are evident from the horrific flooding that accompanied Hurricane Floyd throughout eastern North Carolina, but the opportunity to protect floodplain areas as part of the MST can certainly be counted as one. Prior to the 1999 flood, coastal plain communities along the Neuse River were already challenged economically to keep pace with communities in the Piedmont. The destruction and devastation of the flood further complicated local economic initiatives and has even prolonged the difficult economic times in some of the communities. Businesses and corporations have vacated the region leaving thousands of North Carolinians unemployed. Local government leaders have struggled to meet the demands for services.

Recent initiatives by the State of North Carolina are targeted at reversing this economic decline and positioning coastal plain communities for an improved quality of life and future economic opportunity. The MST-East can become part of these broader initiatives being spearheaded by the NC Departments of Commerce, Environment and Natural Resources, and Transportation, to improve access to community and outdoor resources, preserve and protect the natural features of the region, introduce new economic strategies, and improve water quality.

Throughout the United States, numerous examples exist that clearly demonstrate the ability of long distance trails to contribute to the economic vitality of a region. For example, the State of Missouri's 300-mile KATY Trail generates more than \$10 million in new revenues annually for regional and local communities that

are linked by the trail. The KATY has improved awareness of the Missouri River and its floodplain, and has generated hundreds of new business start-ups from wineries to bed and breakfast inns to cafes. The trail is a major source of pride for Missourians and offers an excellent model of the economic benefits that long distance trails can stimulate.

Methodology

This conceptual plan proposes a route and alignment for a 246-mile, combined land and water trail that will make up the MST-East. The purpose of the Plan is to suggest a possible trail alignment for the land based trail, to identify needed access sites for the river trail, and to suggest an implementation strategy for



acquiring, building and managing sections of the MST through Eastern North Carolina. This information is provided only as a guide for decision making, not as a “master plan” for this trail.

This document focuses on defining a specific route and alignment for a foot trail and paddle trail through the eastern counties of North Carolina, from the Falls Lake Dam in Wake County to Cedar Island in Carteret County. Planning for the Western and Central Sections will be covered in future documents.

ONE SECTION, THREE REGIONS, & SEVEN COUNTIES

Developing a plan for the entire MST-East is a daunting task. To facilitate more focused discussion and to show an acceptable level of detail in the presentations and maps, the study area was divided into several smaller planning units, or regions. These regions follow County boundaries. From east to west, the 3 regions of the MST-East are:

Region 1) Wake and Johnston Counties

Region 2) Wayne, Lenoir, and Pitt Counties

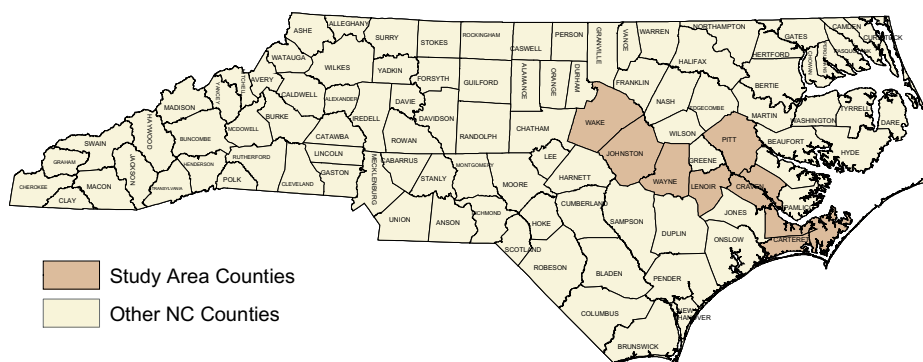
Region 3) Craven and Carteret Counties

Each region served as the boundary for the public meetings that were part of this planning process. (See Appendix E for more information on those public meetings) They also served as boundaries for conversations about planning and project prioritization.

In addition to these regional groupings, county by county maps were created to help local jurisdictions focus in on their portion of the trail. County scale maps are presented in Appendix A. The regional maps are available in Chapter 3.

CONSOLIDATED PLANNING

Local greenway plans, farmland protection efforts, and water and land protection efforts are underway in each of the regions surrounding the proposed MST corridor. This plan was commissioned by the NC Division of Parks and Recreation in an effort to promote collaboration among these efforts, efficiency in reaching collective conservation and recreation goals, and maximized effectiveness of scarce grant assistance. The essential focus of the plan was a 2000' corridor of land along the Neuse River (1000 feet on either side) within which a recommendation was to be made for the best location of a walking path and paddle trail with developed access points that could connect the Falls Lake Dam to Cedar Island.



Existing Trails, Greenways, & Access Points

Local governments have been active in the planning and development of trails within the planning corridor that could become part of or connected to the MST-East. These trail systems include Falls Lake Trail, the Riverwalk in Smithfield, Stoney Creek in Goldsboro, Cliffs of the Neuse State Park, Brice Creek Trail, and the Neusiok Trail in the Croatan National Forest. These are described below in the county by county listings.

TRAILS AND GREENWAYS

WAKE COUNTY: The future MST corridor will connect the 7-mile Falls Lake Segment (US 50 on south shore of Falls Lake to US 98) to the 13-mile Six Forks Road to Falls Lake Dam segment. Both trails cross state recreation lands.

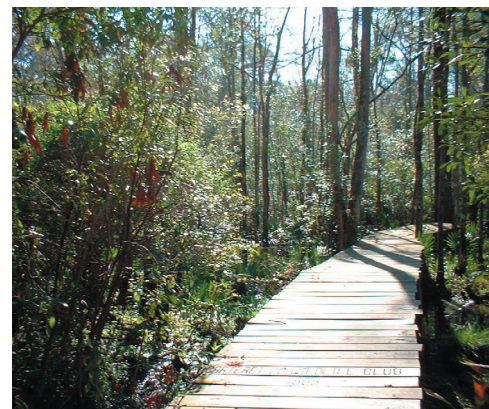
JOHNSTON COUNTY: The Smithfield Riverwalk will become a part of the MST corridor. The Riverwalk is a paved urban trail in the Town Commons Park. It follows along the Neuse River for about a mile on the Downtown's western edge, beginning at the Smith's Ferry boat ramp, connecting to the Town Commons Amphitheater, and extending to the Kiddie Park. Plans exist for connector trails through Smithfield to connect to parks and other trail spurs.

WAYNE COUNTY: The Stoney Creek Greenway will connect to the MST corridor from the north. It follows along the west side of Stoney Creek, southward through Goldsboro from Quail Park (near the US 70 Bypass) to the Neuse River. This urban, historic trail extends approximately 5 miles to connect to the Eastern Segment at the Neuse River.

WAYNE COUNTY: The Cliffs of the Neuse State Park has several trails throughout the park connecting park offices, picnic grounds, a museum, streams, and observation areas. Trails along the Neuse exist atop the cliffs, offering exceptional views for future users of the MST corridor.

CRAVEN COUNTY: The 12-mile Brice Creek Canoe Trail begins at Lawson Creek Park on the Trent River (across the river and south of New Bern) and ends at the bridge on SR 1111 on the way to Havelock. It will likely become an important part of the MST corridor.

CRAVEN COUNTY AND CARTERET COUNTY: The 20-mile Neusiok Trail runs north to south from the Pine Cliff Recreation Area on the Neuse to the Newport River. The trail is primarily in the Croatan National Forest through varied terrain, sandy beaches, hardwood ridges, cypress-palmetto swamps, pocosins, salt marshes. This trail will connect to the MST and a portion may become part of the main MST corridor.



RIVER TRAIL ACCESS POINTS

There are 21 documented canoe access points along the Eastern Segment, according to John Hinners in the publication *Just Around The Bend: A Paddle Journey Down the Upper Neuse*. The list and mileage along the trail, starting from Falls Lake Dam, are below:

WAKE COUNTY:

Falls Lake Dam. 0
US 401 Bridge. 7.4
Buffalo Road Ramp. 10.4
Above Milburnie Dam. 14
Anderson Point Park, above Gunnison Rapids. 17

JOHNSTON COUNTY:

State Route 42 Bridge. 31.9
Smithfield Town Commons Boat Ramp. 46
Richardson's Bridge Ramp. Before State
Route 1201 Bridge. 74

WAYNE COUNTY:

State Route 1224 Bridge Ramp. 80.9
US 117 Ramp. 99.9
State Route 581 Ramp. 106.3
State Route 111 Bridge (Canoe Outfitter-private ramp). 112.8
Seven Springs Ramp. 121

LENOIR COUNTY:

US 70 Ramp. Kinston. 142.2
State Route 55 Bridge. Albritton's Landing. 154.2

CRAVEN COUNTY:

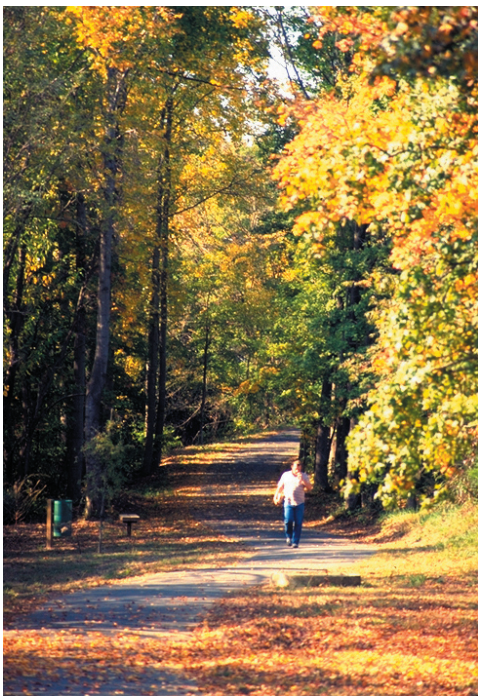
State Route 1470. Maple Cypress Landing. 168
State Route 1441. Cowpen Landing. 179.4
State Route 1423. Spring Gardens Landing. 181.5
Cool Springs Landing. One mile up Swift Creek. 185
Glenburnie Park Ramp. New Bern. 189.7
Union Point Park Ramp. New Bern. 193



MST EAST - A LINK TO LOCAL TRAILS AND GREENWAYS

In some areas along the corridor, much work has already been done at the local level. The MST will serve as a connector between these existing networks.

WAKE COUNTY/RALEIGH: The Capital Area Greenway System in Raleigh is one of the oldest and most developed greenway and trail networks in the Southeastern US. Additionally, a new network of proposed trails and greenways will be established within Wake County, connecting cities and towns with parks, residential neighborhoods, office parks and cultural sites. Both of these systems tie into the Neuse River and the proposed MST-East corridor, providing access for city and county residents.



GOLDSBORO: Wayne County Trail. This 8.7-mile trail begins at the mouth of the Little River where it meets the Neuse River. It follows the Neuse 2,500 feet before turning east to go through Old Waynesborough Historic Village. The trail heads east through historic Goldsboro, crossing an old stagecoach road and rail line, to Stoney Creek Park. Here it merges with the existing Stoney Creek Greenway Trail following the creek to the Neuse River.



KINSTON: The Town of Kinston's Green Infrastructure Plan details trails along the Neuse River on both sides. Kinston wants the MST to link to numerous, important town sites including the Nature Center, CSS Neuse, Cultural Resources Museum, Harmony Hill, Kelly's Mill Pond and Tulls (via Southwest Creek), and numerous Civil War heritage sites.

NEW BERN: A plan is underway for a series of urban trail segments through historic New Bern that would become a key portion of the MST.

CROATAN NATIONAL FOREST: Several existing and planned paddle trails exist including a 30-mile trail planned for the White Oak River.

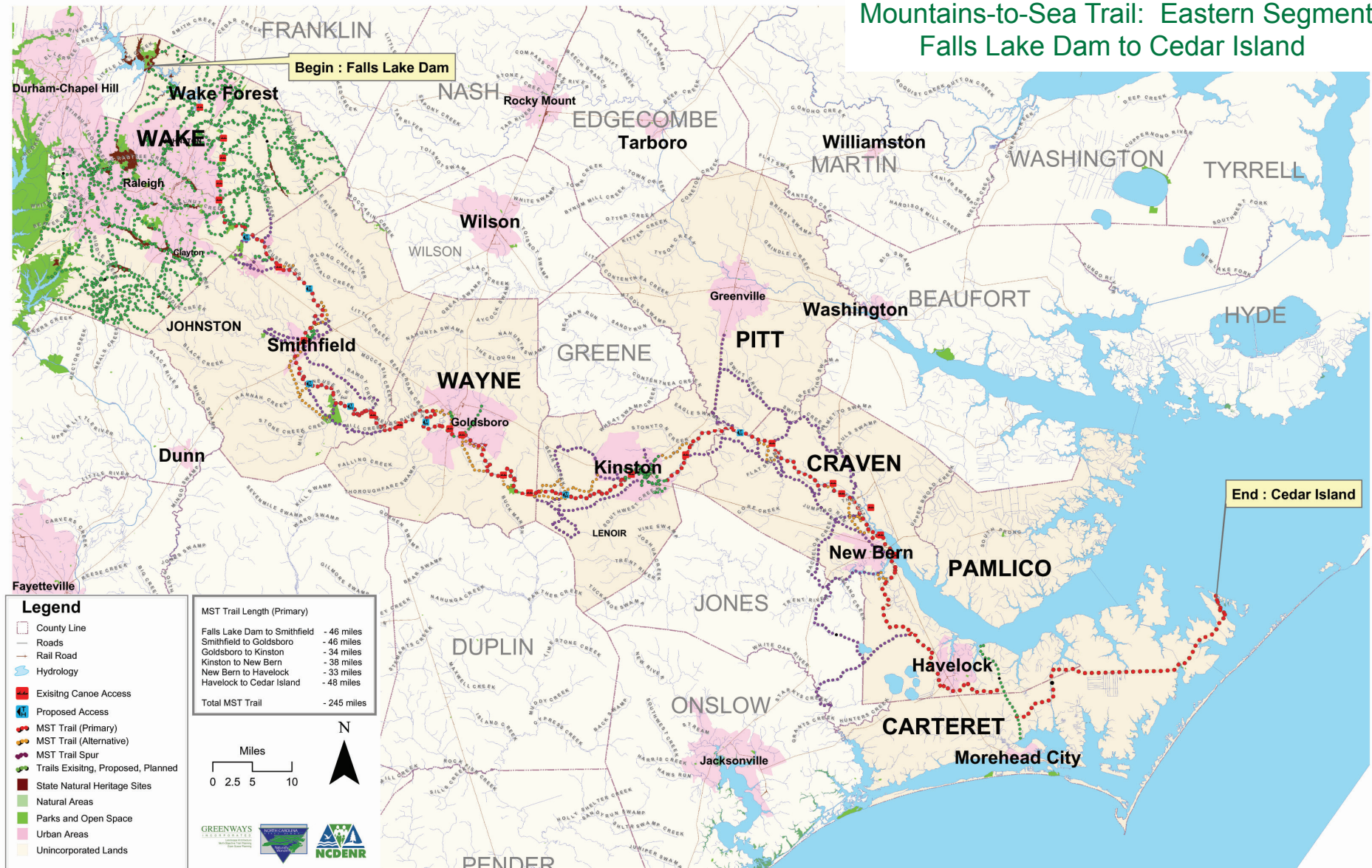
MST East Overall Plan

The map on the next page shows the proposed route of the MST. Included in this image are the main foot trail as well as alternative trails that provide other options for the main trail alignment, and spur trails that link to other trails, parks and destinations. The Primary MST route is shown in RED, the Alternate routes in YELLOW, and the Spur trails in PURPLE. Also shown are the current planning efforts of local partners, which appear in GREEN. County level maps showing even greater detail can be found in Appendix A.

CD copies of this plan are available from the State Trails Program office. All text and maps are in .pdf format to allow users to view the maps in greater detail.



Mountains-to-Sea Trail: Eastern Segment Falls Lake Dam to Cedar Island



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